

Government Records Bulletin

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■ Compound Electronic Documents: Opportunities and Challenges

The concept of the compound electronic document represents a good focus to illustrate some of the opportunities and challenges flowing from the new tools of information technology.

In the next decade the deployment of information technology within government will be supported more and more by business case considerations to meet broadly based enterprise objectives. Emphasis will be placed on providing government employees with tools to increase their productivity, and on developing innovative approaches to the application of information technologies to support the delivery of government programs and services.

It is evident that the merging of information processing and telecommunications combined with the integration of voice, data, graphics and image information within a single system is an underlying major technical direction.

With improving price performance, such a trend should help to minimize the cost of collecting, storing, using and disseminating information.

Another evident trend is that primary applications such as text processing, data processing and information retrieval will continue to merge into integrated information systems serving multiple applications. This trend, in part, responds to the need to maximize the usefulness of collected information.

The above trends towards convergence are best illustrated in the compound electronic document, which includes text, data, graphics, signatures, non-coded information, spreadsheet information and voice annotation.

One goal of office workers is to be able to move their applications between different systems while communicating with their colleagues, and to have them operate consistently. This means that a compound electronic document and the coded characters that tell the computer how to behave would have to move together. To accomplish this electronic dialogue, a wide range of standards, often called an application portability architecture, is necessary. These standards would coordinate with the operating system, data base management system, network services, document architecture and user interfaces to accomplish the user's goals. These key interface specifications have now been identified, and should be sought by users when they plan their integrated office support systems.

While such a future installation would permit more office functions to be carried out electronically, more productively and more rapidly, there are a number of information management issues presented by the new technology. When is a compound electronic document deemed to be "official" or

"corporate"? What is the legal status of such a document? How does it impact on our traditional view of the document life cycle, particularly when individual components of such a document are supported by their own individual life cycles? In fact, how does it impact on our fundamental understanding of what a document is? This is particularly important when we recognize that what we see on the screen may have been created by software that was used to pull together pieces of text, data and image from pools of images, text and data that by themselves may be meaningless. Once the screen image disappears, so too does both our logical and physical view of the document. On a more specific scale we must also be concerned about the extent to which technical and procedural specifications are available to permit organizations to effectively file, retrieve, retain, conserve and dispose of (including transfer to an archives) electronic documents. When one sees the technology arriving and ready for use, with key questions about the management of information unanswered, it is fair to say that a principal constraint upon the effective use of the technology will be the inability to adapt intellectually and organizationally to the opportunities it presents.

The information management and information technology standards issues described above are being addressed in the Treasury Board Information Technology Standards Working Group on Office Systems. Interested parties should contact Bruce Catley, Information Management Division, Treasury Board Secretariat (957-2497) or John McDonald, Government Records Branch, National Archives of Canada (953-5721).

On a broader front, the current Treasury Board Administrative Policies are being redrafted to reflect the need for

strategic information management planning (linked to missions of departments) to emphasize business case evaluations for information technology investments, and to promote the use of information technology as a lever of government. Additional information on this policy direction is contained in two documents:

- *Strategic Direction in Information Technology Management in the Government of Canada*, 1987
- *Introducing an Information Management Strategic Planning Process for the Government of Canada*, 1988.

Both of these documents are available from:

Information Technology Management Treasury Board Secretariat
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0R5
(613) 957-2517

People expect public sector information-based operations to be timely, responsive and of high quality, just as private sector services are. Recognizing this has helped to move us toward an electronic age. In this new environment all of us are challenged to understand the issues that the combined technologies are bringing to us. A starting point for dialogue that all office workers can identify with is the compound electronic document.

Ed Acheson
Information Technology Management
Treasury Board Secretariat ■

Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial Records Management Council Meeting

The annual meeting of representatives to the Records Management Council of the federal, provincial and territorial governments took place in September in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and was hosted by the provincial government. During three days of meetings, the Council focussed its discussions on the issues faced by each jurisdiction in managing the retention and disposal of government records.

Decisions were reached that will result in the drafting of two important documents. The first will be a synopsis of the records management responsibility profile within each jurisdiction, and will be used as the Council's base operational document. The other document will be an analytical report on the issues and challenges in scheduling government records for retention and destruction in Canada.

The next formal meeting of the Council will take place in Regina, Saskatchewan, in the fall of 1989. ■

Converging Disciplines in the Management of Recorded Information: An International Symposium

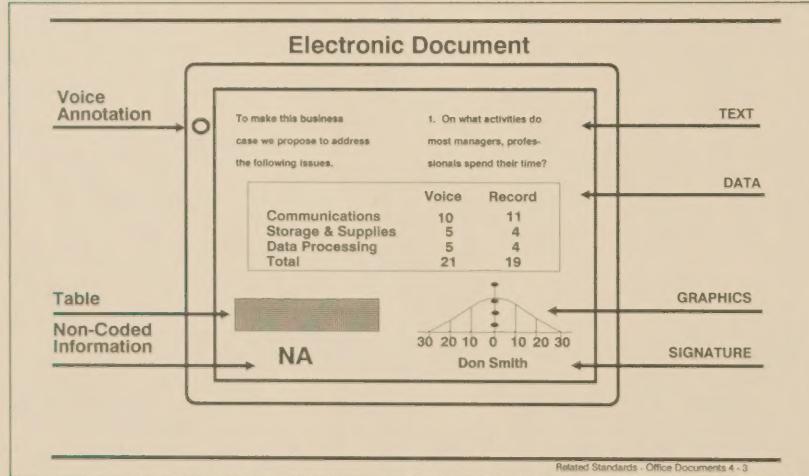
The National Archives of Canada will host an International Symposium on Current Records in cooperation with the Current Records Committee of the International Council on Archives (ICA). The second in a series of symposia leading to the hosting of the 1992 International ICA Congress in Montreal, the Symposium on Current Records will be held in Ottawa, May 15-17, 1989.

The purpose is to bring together colleagues from different disciplines and countries to share approaches to managing recorded information in the dynamic technological environment of the 1980s and beyond. It is directed at information executives who must manage technological convergence and find interdisciplinary solutions.

The program will include a discussion of the evolution of records, practices, technologies and standards applicable to the management of recorded information. Sessions will explore how information tools and techniques are changing, the factors affecting change, the application of new technological developments, and the emerging standards for the management of records. The program will examine information management disciplines as they relate to records in organizations, the traditional and future roles of these disciplines, and the extent to which they are converging.

The Symposium will also deal with management concepts and information management policies, the environment within which those concepts and policies are developed, and the challenges they are designed to address.

For further information on the Symposium, please contact Winston A. Gomes, (819) 953-5711. ■



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Disciplines convergentes dans la gestion de l'information consignée

Les archives nationales du Canada ont organisé, en collaboration avec le Canada et les archives nationales du Québec, un conseil international des archives consacré à la question de l'archivage des documents diplomatiques. Ce conseil a été créé à Ottawa du 15 au 17 mai 1982. Ce colloque sera le deuxième d'une série qui culminera avec le congrès international du CIAL à Montréal en 1992.

Le but de ce colloque est de renouer des spécificités des disciplines et de réunir des chercheurs issus du même établissement. Il s'agit de favoriser la convivialité entre les différents acteurs de l'université et de développer la recherche dans le domaine des sciences humaines et sociales.

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Reunions du Conseil consultatif fédéral/provincial territorial de la gestion des documents

■ Dans ce nouvel environnement, nous a transposées dans l'ère de l'électronique. Dans ce nouvel environnement, nous nous devons d'entre nous de bien saisir les enjeux que suscitent les technologies combinées. Le document électronique intégral est un excellent sujet de dialogue qui intéressera tous les employés.

Le Conseil du Trésor révise ses politiques administratives pour qu'elles passent étaut comme il convient d'une planification stratégique de la gestion de l'information (une planification ratifiée au mandat de chacun des ministères), qu'elles mettent l'accent sur les critères de rentabilité applicables aux investissements dans la technologie de l'information et qu'elles encouragent le recours à la technologie de l'information comme outil de planification du gouvernement. Des renseignements complets figurent dans les deux documents suivants:

Fresnemmen, le groupe de travail sur les normes de la technologie de l'information du ministère du Conseil du Trésor étudie des questions, comme celles qui sont évoquées plus haut, relatives aux normes de la gestion de l'information et de la technologie de l'information. Les intéresses peuvent communiquer avec Bruce Gately, Division de la gestion de l'information du Conseil du Trésor (95-2471). John McDonald, Directeur des documents gouvernementaux, Archives nationales du Canada (953-5721).

Bulletin des documents gouvernementaux

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Dans ce numéro... DOCUMENTS éléctroniques : DOCUMENTS du Conseil consultatif fédéral/provincial/ territorial de la gestion des documents éléctroniques et de la gestion des DISCIPLINES convergentes dans la gestion de l'information consignée